



NEWSBREAK

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What's New?

The National Center on Performance Incentives Hosts Its First Conference

The National Center on Performance Incentives (NCPI) hosted its first research-to-policy forum in Nashville, Tennessee, on February 28–29, 2008. NCPI is a federally funded research and development center housed at Vanderbilt University's Peabody College. NCPI investigates whether or not financial incentives for teachers, administrators, and schools affect the quality of teaching and learning.

The conference, "Performance Incentives: Their Growing Impact on American K–12 Education," included keynote speeches by Randi Weingarten, president of the United Federation of Teachers, and James W. Guthrie, executive director of NCPI and policy director of CECR.

Over 300 researchers, practitioners, and policymakers attended the conference to hear eight panel presentations based on a variety of research projects. The panel topics included the following:

- Pay for performance in education, government, and other sectors.
- Pay preferences of teachers and school systems.
- The impact of pay for performance on student achievement.
- Strategies for identifying high-performing teachers.
- International perspectives on the impact of pay for performance on student achievement.
- Tradeoffs and gaming in pay reform policy.
- Recruitment and retention of high-performing teachers.
- Legal and political dynamics of pay for performance.

View additional conference information and papers on the [NCPI website](http://www.performanceincentives.org/conference/index.asp) at www.performanceincentives.org/conference/index.asp.

Hot Off the Press

[Education Measures Now Laws](#)—*The Salt Lake Tribune*, March 18, 2008

Utah Governor signs a new bill that provides \$5 million toward \$1,000 signing bonuses for new teachers and \$20 million toward performance pay for teachers.

[Idaho Senate Kills Merit Pay Plan for Teachers](#)—*Jackson Hole Star Tribune*, February 29, 2008

The Idaho Senate rejects a scaled-back version of State Education Superintendent Tom Luna's original pay-for-performance plan, which would have allowed teachers to earn salary bonuses for increasing student performance, teaching hard-to-staff subjects, and taking leadership positions.

[House Committee Approves Pilot Merit Pay Program for Teachers](#)—*Tulsa World*, February 27, 2008

The Oklahoma House Education Committee approves a plan to pilot merit-pay programs in up to 25 schools. The program would reward teachers for increases in student achievement, completion of professional development, and performance reviews from peers as well as principals.

[How to Make Great Teachers](#)—*Time*, February 13, 2008

This article offers a discussion of the national debate on merit pay for teachers.

Spotlight

This month, *Spotlight* is dedicated to a preview of a recently released CECR module titled *Data Quality Essentials*. This module is part of the series, [Guide to Implementation: Resources for Applied Practice](#), found at cecr.ed.gov/guides/compReform.cfm, and introduced in last month's newsletter. The series, which will be profiled over the next few months, includes other modules regarding information technology (IT) considerations, observations of teacher performance, an educator compensation reform checklist, and a guide to stakeholder engagement and communication.

Data Quality Essentials for Successful Performance-Based Pay

Adapted from *Data Quality Essentials* (2008) by Jeffery G. Watson, University of Wisconsin–Madison

In order to complete compensation reform successfully, many school districts must transform information systems that were originally designed for reporting and accountability into systems that support performance-pay work. This often involves linking or merging various data systems to create one central data repository that will allow state, district, or school officials to accurately measure educator performance based on student learning outcomes and to determine the related performance payout amount.

When school districts use data systems in new ways, they quickly expose previously unnoticed data quality problems. Unless these problems are sufficiently addressed, inaccurate data in one system has the potential to affect a compensation reform effort in negative ways. Therefore, compensation reformers should focus on three key questions in order to begin to tackle potential data quality concerns:

- **What are the key characteristics of data quality for compensation reform projects?**

In order to support a fair performance-based pay system, states, districts, and schools must consider six dimensions of data quality (accuracy, validity, granularity, interoperability, relational, and reducibility). These critical dimensions assist in the decision-making process in terms of which data elements to use in determining performance-based awards. Therefore, program directors, state and district policymakers, and IT staff need to collaborate and communicate on these particular dimensions in order to create a reliable and fair data system to support compensation reform efforts.

- **What are some common ways in which data quality problems can manifest within a compensation reform project?**

When state, district, or school staff encounter data quality problems, they may be tempted to ignore them, but to do so risks losing stakeholder support for the project. If data quality problems arise after the distribution of awards, reactions will likely be very negative. Therefore, compensation reformers must anticipate and plan for any data quality problems that may arise. Solutions are usually within reach, and both project and IT staff need to jointly support correction actions.

- **What are some potential data quality challenges and their related solutions?**

Technical issues (e.g., technological incompatibilities) as well as nontechnical issues (e.g., data entry, conflicting or ambiguous definitions) create data quality challenges. Staff must determine the source of data issues and use dimensions of data quality to develop potential solutions. Previous attempts at compensation reform provide three examples of common data quality challenges and the use of data quality dimensions to address these challenges. These challenges include the following: linking teacher data from student information systems and human resource systems, connecting teachers to students, and classifying teachers into categories.

To read more about data quality essentials, including research-based answers to the above questions and challenges, please access the [entire module](http://www.cecr.ed.gov/guides/dataQuality.cfm) online at www.cecr.ed.gov/guides/dataQuality.cfm.

Contact Us

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The Center for Educator Compensation Reform (CECR) was awarded to Westat—in partnership with Learning Point Associates, Synergy Enterprises Inc., Vanderbilt University, and the University of Wisconsin—by the U.S. Department of Education in October 2006.

The primary purpose of CECR is to support the Teacher Incentive Fund (TIF) grantees with their implementation efforts through the provision of ongoing technical assistance and the development and dissemination of timely resources. CECR also is charged with raising national awareness of alternative and effective strategies for educator compensation through this newsletter, a Web-based clearinghouse, and other outreach activities. We look forward to an exciting partnership with the TIF grantees as we embark together on blazing a new path for education reform.

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